



## Halfway Happy by rinachuu62

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**Summary:** Elmax one-shot taking place towards the end of 3x08.  
After reading Hopper's letter, Eleven shares a moment with Max.

## Halfway Happy

**Disclaimer:** English isn't my first language so I apologize for any potential mistake :)

"El? Are you all right?"

Eleven looked up from Hopper's letter and turned around to see Max, standing in the doorway with a worried look on her face. She was wearing braids and a dark blue sweater, and Eleven had to fight the urge to rush into her arms for comfort. She just couldn't believe Hopper was gone for good and would never come back.

"Will's mom told me you were in there... Do you want me to come back later or...?"

"It's okay. *I'm* okay," she replied, wiping away her tears and standing up to join her friend.

"You aren't okay... and that's totally fine. It's normal," explained Max. "I'm not okay either. I've lost my step-brother and you have lost your... your..."

"Dad," finished Eleven.

"Yeah."

They weren't related by blood and had only known each other for a year and a half, but that was the truth. Sometime between all the "halfway happy" and the "keep the door open three inches", Hopper had become somewhat of a father to her, and Max could see it in her watery eyes.

"Does that hurt?"

"What?"

"Dying," continued Eleven, who was still clutching the letter in her right hand.

"Oh. No... I don't think it does. Some people say it's like... falling

asleep or something."

Of course, Max knew that it must not have been the case for Billy and Hopper, but she couldn't bring herself to tell Eleven the harsh truth.

"Hopper loved sleeping. Sometimes, I'd find him snoring on the couch with the TV still on."

The two girls couldn't help but giggle at the thought.

"Yeah. That's what dads do," Max finally said before wiping away Eleven's tears, as if it were the most natural thing in the world. "Hey. Everything is gonna be okay."

"I'll miss you."

Somehow, these words seemed to catch her by surprise, and she let her hand linger on Eleven's cheek for a few seconds. She wanted to hold her tight and heal with her, to share jokes, gossips, ice creams, beds and magazines with her, but they wouldn't live in the same town anymore. Surely, the upcoming school year was going to be a hard one. To think she had started this one without knowing who Eleven was... and now she could barely imagine her life without her.

"I'm going to miss you, too. Just promise me something."

"Anything."

"Next time we see each other, we won't hang out for a day or two, but for a whole week."

"A whole *month*," assured Eleven with an adorable smile on her face.

"Even better."

They grinned at each other, and then the brunette put the letter in one of her pockets, and took her friend's hands in her own.

"I'll try and call you," promised Max, interlacing their fingers. "Or even write to you. Whatever you prefer."

"Both. I'd like both."

"Let's do both, then," she agreed. "Obviously it won't be the same as if we were really together, but it will feel like it."

"Yeah. Halfway happy."

They shared an umpteenth smile, and Eleven let go of Max's hands before turning around and coming back with the teddy bear she had found just a few moments ago.

"For you."

"Me?"

"Yes," affirmed Eleven. "You gave me your green scorching—"

"My *scrunchie*," corrected Max.

"Yeah. And now I want you to have this teddy bear so that you won't forget me."

The skater remembered telling her mother she was getting a bit old for teddy bears, but she could definitely make an exception for Eleven.

"Come on, El. I'm not going to forget you. You're my best friend," she said, accepting the gift.

"Am I?"

"No, actually, you're *so much more*."

Eleven froze, her lips parted. She wanted to say something back to Max. Maybe a "Me too", or even an "I love you". She could feel those last three words on the tip of her tongue, and surprisingly, it seemed as natural to say them to Max than to Mike. After all, they were the people she loved the most in the world... with Hopper. And she was going to have to live without them by her side, even though they would always be in her heart.

"I love you, Max," she finally confessed before hugging her.

"I... I love you, too, El," replied Max, closing her eyes at the contact.

She didn't remember ever saying these words to Lucas. It was always and only "I like you" with him. She liked to tease him and call him a stalker, but her relationship with Eleven was so different. She wanted to spoil her, protect her, make her laugh and make her happy.

They remained in this position until they heard Joyce's voice calling them from downstairs. Eleven gave the room one last look before leaving, Hopper's letter carefully folded in her pocket, and one of her hands still intertwined with Max's.

"No spying on me, okay?"

"I'll try."

"Try? At least, let me know when you do! Call me or something."

"Will do."

"Oh, and I still need to lend you my mom's magazines."